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Idiom Stories

GRINDING A NEEDLE FROM A PESTLE



· 铁杵磨成针 ·



成语故事

中华传统经典故事绘本
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CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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Retold by Song Huaizhi
Translated by Liu Jun & Bruce Humes



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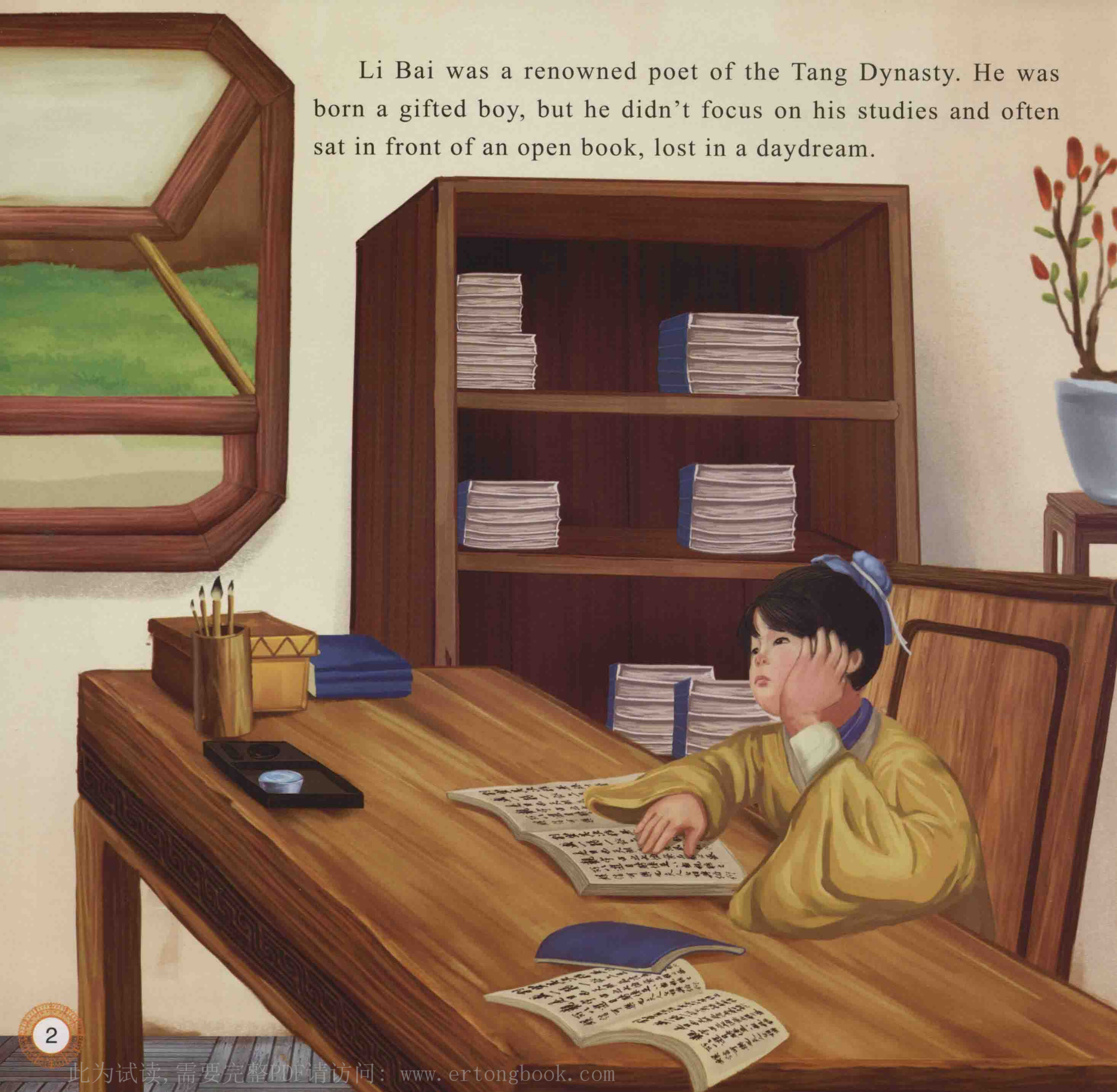
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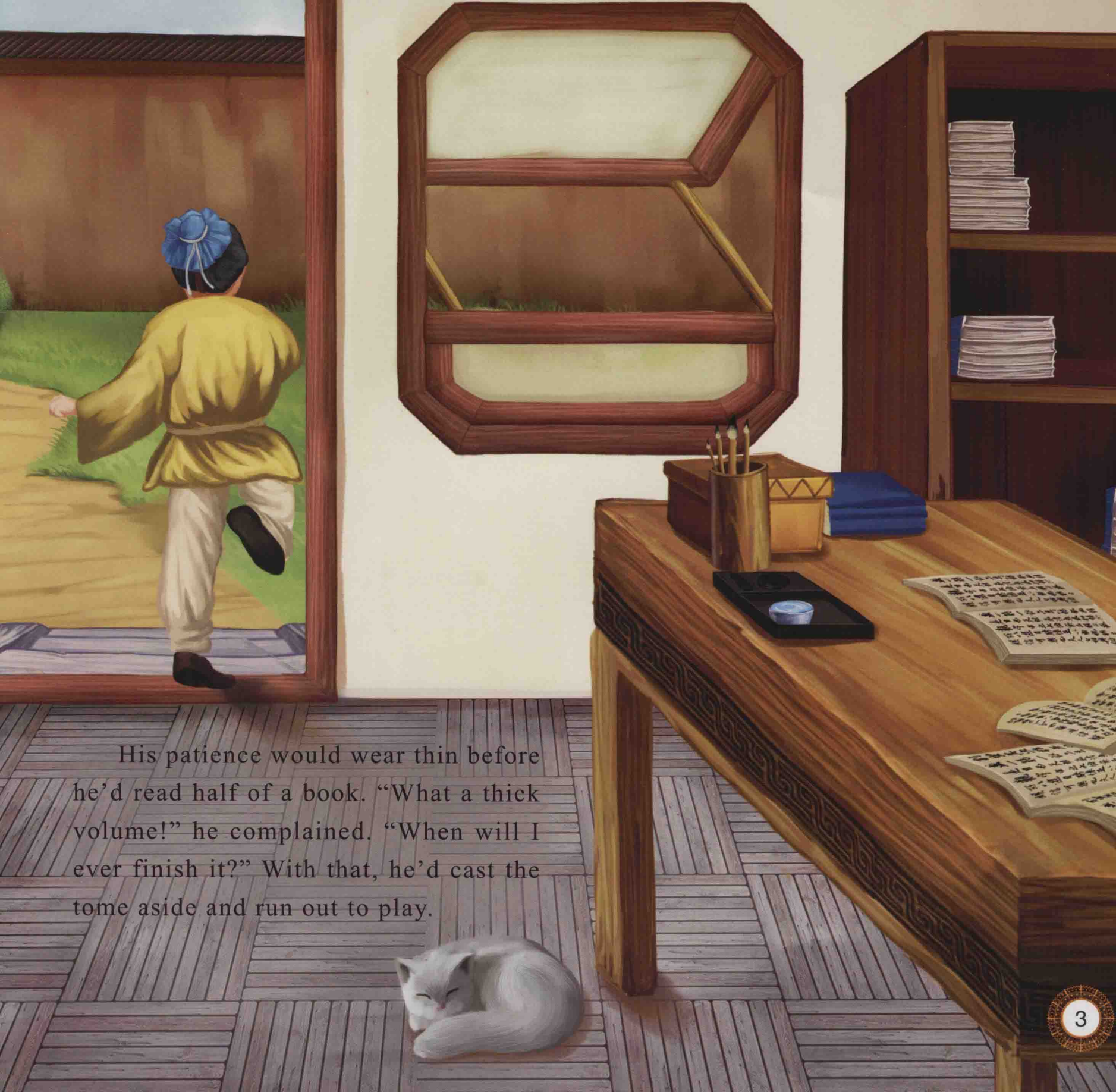
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Li Bai was a renowned poet of the Tang Dynasty. He was born a gifted boy, but he didn't focus on his studies and often sat in front of an open book, lost in a daydream.

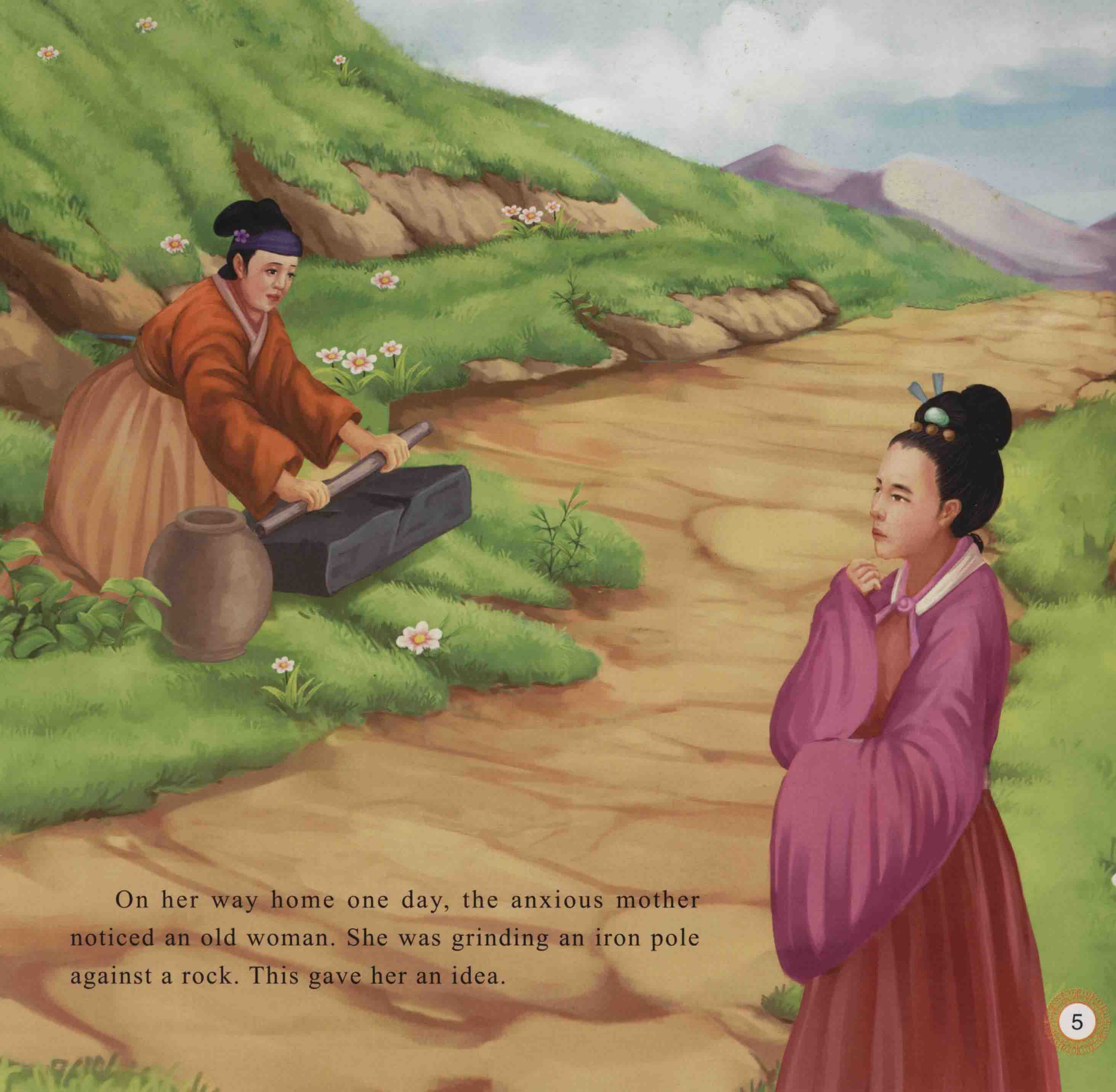




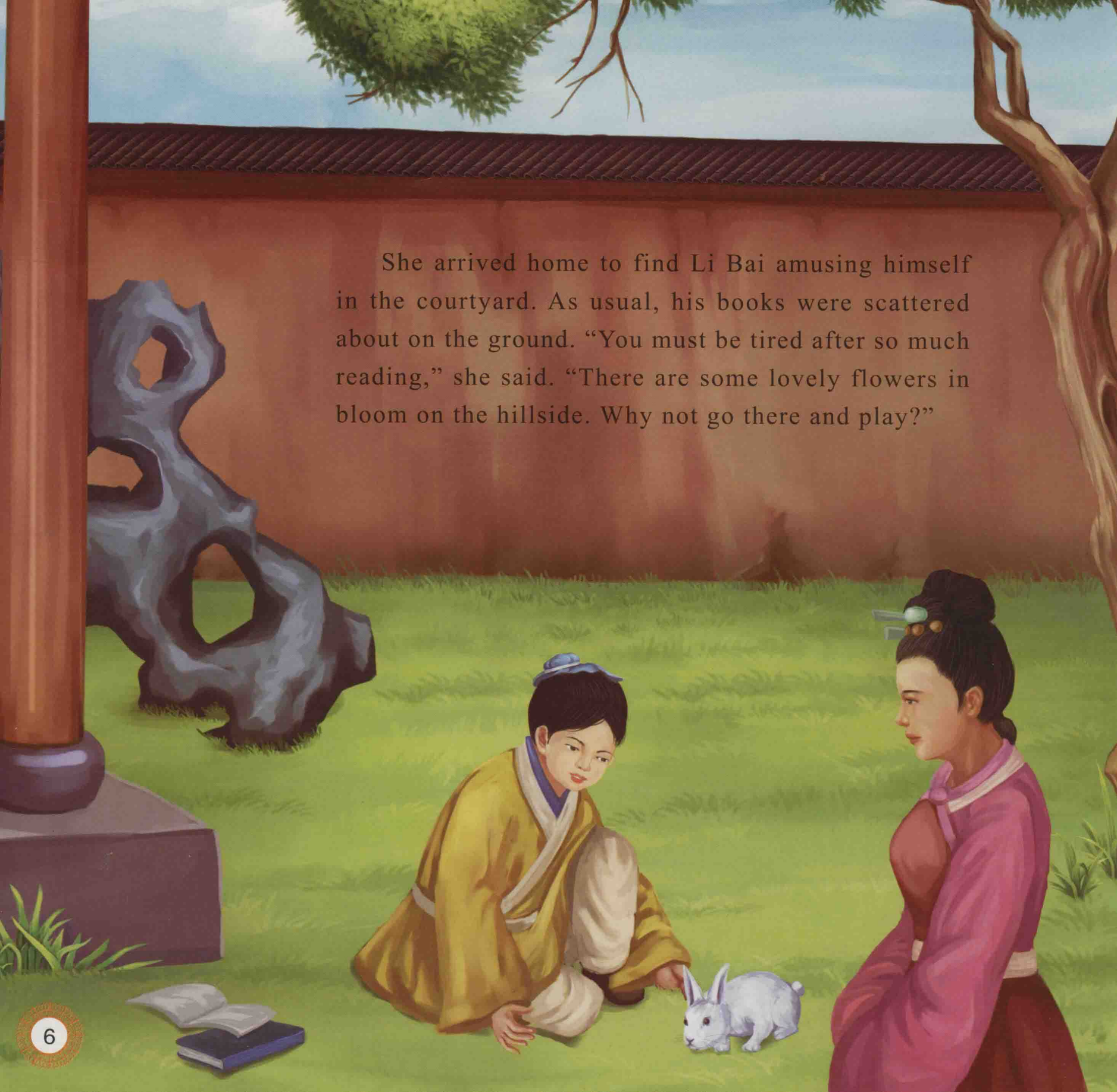
His patience would wear thin before he'd read half of a book. "What a thick volume!" he complained. "When will I ever finish it?" With that, he'd cast the tome aside and run out to play.

Li Bai's mother was troubled by his lack of concentration. "The boy is intelligent. If only he could sit still and study diligently, he could grow up to do great things." But how to entice him to read more earnestly?



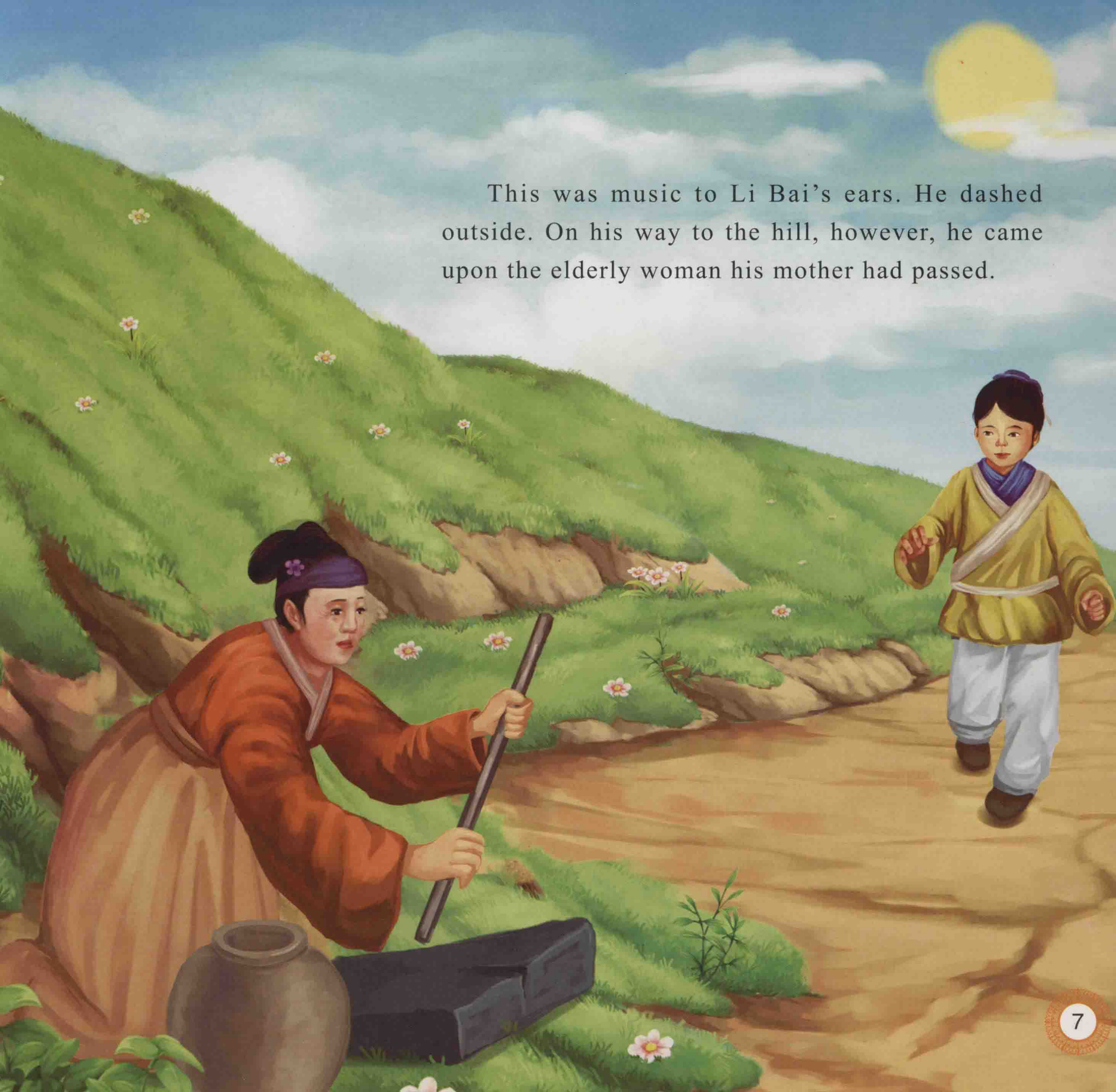


On her way home one day, the anxious mother noticed an old woman. She was grinding an iron pole against a rock. This gave her an idea.

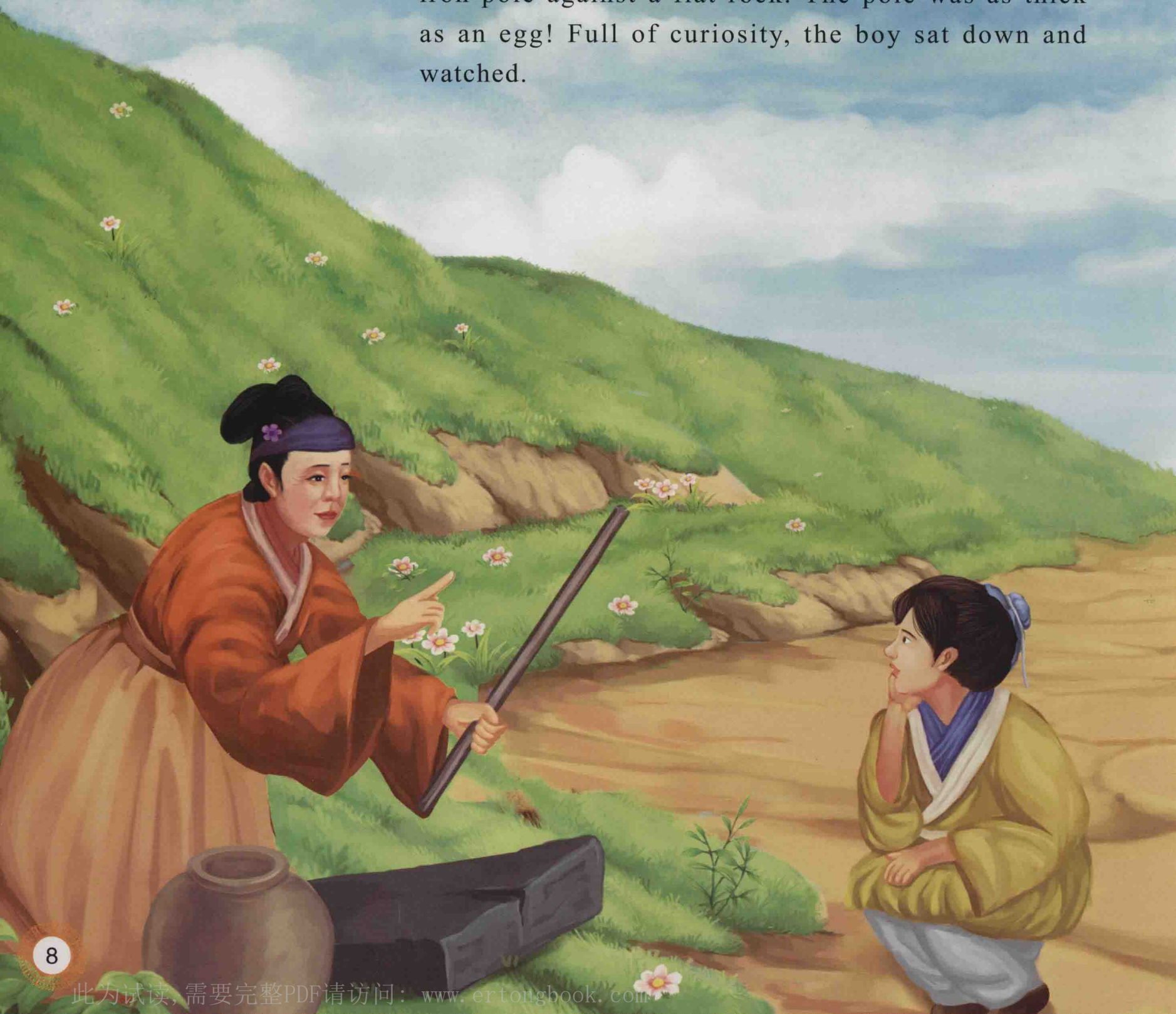


She arrived home to find Li Bai amusing himself in the courtyard. As usual, his books were scattered about on the ground. "You must be tired after so much reading," she said. "There are some lovely flowers in bloom on the hillside. Why not go there and play?"

This was music to Li Bai's ears. He dashed outside. On his way to the hill, however, he came upon the elderly woman his mother had passed.



As he approached, he realized she was grating an iron pole against a flat rock. The pole was as thick as an egg! Full of curiosity, the boy sat down and watched.



The woman concentrated on her hard work and paid the youngster no heed. A long while passed, and Li Bai couldn't sit silently any more. "What are you doing, ma'am?" he asked.



“I’m whetting this pestle into a needle to use for embroidery,” she said without pausing to look up.

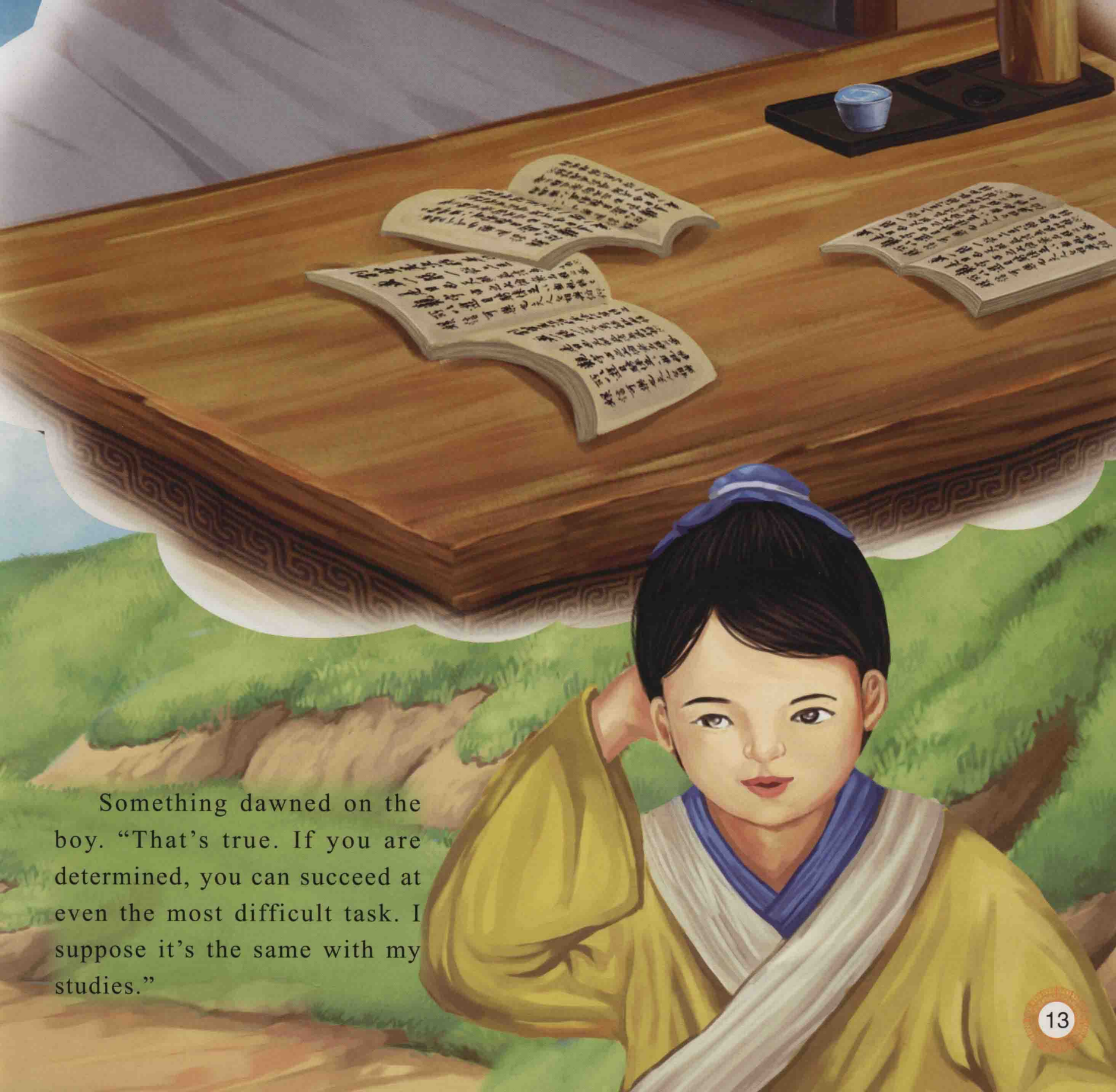


“A needle?” Li Bai couldn’t believe his ears.
He broke out laughing. “Why bother? When will
this thick pole ever turn into a fine needle?”



“Listen here, boy,” she said, looking him in the eyes. “This is indeed a thick pestle. But if I continue whetting it every day, won’t it eventually become a needle? See? It’s already much thinner than before.”





Something dawned on the boy. “That’s true. If you are determined, you can succeed at even the most difficult task. I suppose it’s the same with my studies.”

Li Bai guessed what his mother had on her mind when she suggested he take this path to the hill. "Now I understand! Thank you, ma'am," he said as he waved goodbye and ran home.

